

Guru Nanak's Journeys to the Middle East



An eyewitness account based
on the diary of an Arabic writer
who accompanied him

Babania Kahania – Translator's Note

During Guru Nanak's journeys in the Middle East, a local author, Taajudin Naqshabandhi, joined Guru Nanak and remained with him for roughly one-and-a-half to two years. Taajudin documented his time with Guru Nanak in great detail. Four centuries later, a young man from Kashmir, Syed Mushtaq Hussain, chanced upon Taajudin's handwritten manuscript while studying to become an Islamic scholar. This manuscript changed Mushtaq's life. He converted to Sikhism and went on to become the renowned Sant Syed Prithipal Singh.

In the absence of any facility available for copying the book in facsimile, Mushtaq Hussain took notes from Taajudin's manuscript. He also took notes from another book, *Twarikh-e-Arab*, written by Khwaja Jainul Abdin, a Muslim author who also accompanied Guru Nanak during his travels to Mecca. Mushtaq's notes later formed the basis of the Punjabi book, *Babe Nanak di Baghdad Pheri*.

I came across a reference to this book in Bhai Harbans Lal's article, "A Man of God Sans Religion," published in the *Sikh Review*. I could not wait to read the book, and what an experience it was when I did! I was excited, and started narrating excerpts from the book in English to my daughter who was born in Canada. Guru ji says: *Babanian kahanian put saput Karen*, meaning "the stories of our ancestors transform our children into good children" (SGGS

951). So that these stories of our ancestors can be shared with our English-speaking youth in the West, I decided to translate this book. I sent a note to Sardar Kunwarajit Singh, seeking his permission to translate the text; his reply came promptly alongside words of encouragement for this initiative.

Brief background on Mushtaq's life is provided in the Forewords written by Sardar Himmat Singh and Sardar Kunwarajit Singh. These forewords should be read before reading the text because they provide the necessary background to the main text.

In the process of translation, I researched several other sources about the Guru's travels in the Middle East, and have added footnotes throughout the text. I have added an Appendix to this book which summarizes some of these sources, sources which offer compelling corroborating evidence of the authenticity of these travels. It is my sincere hope that this book will encourage readers to explore Nanak's path of spirituality. I have provided my email address below, and would consider myself fortunate to receive and compile from readers other evidence on this subject.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh
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Foreword

A unique and pure devotee: Sant Syed Prithipal Singh

The book *Akali Morche ate Jhabbar* is a reliable source about the life of Sant Syed Prithipal Singh. In addition to this text, Syed Prithipal Singh, in 1951, had himself completed a manuscript about his life and about Guru Nanak's journey to Mecca and Medina. This material, through carelessness, remained unpublished to date. About ten years ago, his son, Mohinderpal Singh Bedi, had the author of these lines electronically scan the manuscript.

Brief Biography: Syed Prithipal Singh (né Mushtaq Hussein) was the only son of Mujafar Hussein, and the grandson of Pir-Bakur Shah of the famous family of Mirpur, Kashmir. The period from 1927 to 1930 was the most revolutionary in his life. During this time, his father decided to go to the Hajj and convinced his son to also go to Mecca-Medina for higher Islamic education.

While doing research at a university in Medina, Mushtaq Hussein came across a handwritten manuscript, *Siyahto Baba Nanak Fakir*, in a library. This manuscript was written by an Arabic and Persian writer named Taajudin Naqshabandhi. Taajudin joined Guru Nanak in his journey around Undlas, a town between Erar and Baghdad. While living with Guru Nanak, he kept a diary—the *Siyahto Baba Nanak Fakir* manuscript—which he submitted to the

library in Medina around 1512 AD¹. This suggests that Guru Nanak Dev Ji was in the Middle East—in Mecca and Baghdad—for roughly one-and-a-half to two years in and around the years 1511 to 1513 AD.

Upon his return to Mirpur in 1930, Mushtaq was deeply saddened by communal violence stoked in Kashmir by Sheikh Abdulla's supporters, and in Jammu, by his own father, Mujafar Hussain. In this region, the Sikh Gurudwara of Kirtangarh was made the target of arson and destruction. This gurudwara was constructed by Sant Baba Sunder Singh to care for the congregation and to promote education. Rioters fueled by feelings of animosity towards Dogra ruler Maharaja Pratap Singh made the Sikh community their first target. Witnessing the destruction first hand, Mushtaq was troubled by these acts of persecution in the name of Islam. His appeals for peace fell on deaf ears.

Mushtaq had been touched by Taajudin's accounts of Guru Nanak's journeys, which were intended to promote the welfare of all humanity. Through these same accounts, he had also seen the ugly face of religious fanaticism, which resulted in the torture and death of Rukn-ud-din, a respected religious leader of Kaaba.

¹ The original text references the year 1504 AD. I believe a mistake was made in converting from the *Hijri* calendar to the Christian one (the Arabic writer's account mentions that Guru ji met Rukn-ud-din in 917 *Hijri*, which corresponds to 1511 AD). The dating of 1511 AD is also consistent with other evidence found in Baghdad (see Appendix for details).

Disappointed, Mushtaq decided to leave for Lahore with his wife, Gulzar Begum, and his son, Mohamad Nazir. At Lahore, he initially studied the Arya Samaj sect, and then Christianity. Finally, he researched Sikhism carefully at the gurudwara built at the site of Guru Arjun Dev ji's martyrdom. It was at this gurudwara that he received *Khande di Pahul* (Sikh initiation) from Giani Achhar Singh (later Singh Sahib Achhar Singh), after many persistent appeals to the Giani. Mushtaq became a Sikh on the fourth of *Jeth* (a month in the Indian calendar which roughly corresponds to May/June) in 1935, and later achieved renown as Sant Syed Prithipal Singh of Patiala. He dedicated his life in the service of the *Panth*.

Sant Syed helped in acquiring land and in establishing a gurudwara at the place where Sikh men and women were martyred in Lahore. Around 1950, he worked with Akali Kaur Singh in India and abroad. Later, he served at the Gurudwara Ghat Sahib in Ropar. He then went to England to help build the gurudwara in South Hall. In 1966, he was at the forefront of the campaign to return Guru Gobind Singh ji's personal weapons to India. He completed his successful human journey in Kanpur while organizing the anniversary celebrations of the birth of Guru Nanak Dev ji. He is survived by his family living in England and in Patiala.

Publishing Syed Prithipal Singh ji's notes from Mecca, Kunwarajit Singh has done praiseworthy work. This

publication will bolster Sikhs' knowledge and faith in the Guru. I congratulate Sardar Kunwarajit Singh for this service.

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Foreword

Around 1947, during Gurburabs, at the Gurudwara Dukh Nivaran in Patiala, a gurumukh used to sing praises of Gurus with utmost respect and devotion. His name was Syed Prithipal Singh Ji. He was about 5 foot 11, of fair complexion, and he had a handsome face. Dressed in white, his flowing beard looked saintly.

As destiny would have it, after completing my education, I left in search of work and lost contact with Syed Prithipal Singh. I ran into him again around 1967 in the gurudwara in Block 4 in Kanpur. He was in good health, and was on a lecturing tour. Well-versed in Punjabi, Arabic, and Persian, and having memorized the Quran Sharif by heart, Sant Syed often quoted ayats from the Quran in his lectures.

Prithipal Singh used to talk about his conversion from Islam to Sikhism in his lectures. His conversion is something which readers will learn about in detail in this book. While on his lecture tour, he spent a significant amount of time in Kota, Rajasthan. This is where Gurcharan Singh Kohli grew to know him personally, and where he acquired the material about Guru Nanak Dev Ji's journey to Mecca and Baghdad. Sardar Gurcharan Singh published a book on this material, entitled *Guru Nanak Dev Ji di Arab Pheri de Kujh Birtaant* (Some Accounts of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Journey to Arabia). Sardar Kulwant Singh of Patiala published and distributed this book. I received a copy

of this book and republished it with permission from Sardar Kulwant Singh.

Syed had accompanied his father to the Hajj. There, he read and made notes of some key accounts from the following two books: *Tareekh-e Arab* and *Siyahto Baba Nanak Fakir*. These accounts include Guru Nanak creating a spring so that the author of *Siyahto Baba Nanak Fakir* could wash before saying *Namaz*. The account of Kaaba turning is also listed in his notes.

Syed Prithipal Singh was impressed by the memorial sites and relics related to Guru Nanak. Upon his return to India, he studied different religions and became a Sikh. He passed away in 1968.

This book contains a priceless heritage, which provides a window into Guru Nanak Dev Ji's multi-faceted personality and into the splendor of his divinity. Revealing truth in the face of tyranny and intolerance, even in foreign lands, is a testimonial to the greatness of Guru Nanak. I am proud and glad to have played a part in maintaining this heritage. I hope that this book will add to our faith in the Guru and the Sikh spirit.

In this material world, this book is a challenge to those who try, in the name of research and science, to disprove historical accounts related to the Gurus.

This book has been enriched by information, views, and a photograph of Syed Prithipal Singh that has been provided by Doctor Himmat Singh. I am thankful to Doctor Himmat Singh for his cooperation.

Humble Servant,
Kunwarajit Singh

The Account of Guru Nanak's Journey to Arabia

Khwaja Jainul Abdin, the author of *Tarikhe Arab*, wrote the first-person account of Guru Nanak Dev ji's Arabian journey. In his Arabic book, he writes, "I was with Guru Nanak Dev Ji when Guru Ji met Qazi (an Islamic religious judge) Rukn-ud-din." As they came face-to-face, Rukn-ud-din offered his Salam, and the Guru replied, "*Sat Shri Akal, Gurbar Akal*" (The Lord immortal is the sole truth; the all-powerful timeless God). Rukn-ud-din asked, "*Fala Alla Mazahbu*," meaning "which religion do you belong to?" The response was, "*Abdulla Allah La Mazahabu*," meaning "I am God's servant; I have no religion."

The whole day passed in questions and answers. There were three hundred and sixty questions in total. About the ban on singing in Islam, the Guru said: "it is written in Hadees that your Prophet Mohammed Sahib went to a wedding in the Quresh tribe where women were singing. Seeing Hazrat Mohammad, they stopped singing folk songs and started singing hymns. Mohammad Sahib Ji said they should sing folk songs and God will bestow respect on them." Stumped, Rukn-ud-din said, "*ya rabi tahroo fi al kabool-ul rab*," meaning "you have been sent to me by God; please bless me with the ability to recognize."

Rukn-ud-din then argued that, in Islam, it is acceptable to cut hair, but that the Guru keeps his hair uncut. In response, the Guru said, "this is not correct. Even your Quran does not allow this." Rukn-

ud-din was taken aback, and asked, “do I go against what the Quran says? Do you mean, ‘I read the Quran, but don’t understand it?’ Please explain.” Then, Guru Ji said to refer to paragraph two Surat Badar Raku 24 Ayat 195², where it is specified that cutting hair is prohibited for the ones who go to the Hajj and wish to lead a spiritual life.

On the issue of whether or not God lives in Kaaba, the Guru said: “even the Quran challenges the notion of considering Kaaba as God’s abode. The God addressed Mohammad and said ‘*Nakhan Akarth Wa Allahay Min Habul Vareed*,’ meaning, ‘I am closer to every human than his own jugular.’” Hearing this, the audience called out, “*Marhaba! Labank!! Zazak Hum Allah Tala*,” meaning, “amazing! We surrender in your service. May God bless you with boon and goodness.”

Over the next days, the Guru continued daily services of *kirtan* (singing God’s praises) and sermons. His services blissfully drew people who were in search of God and truth. People would bring milk, dates, and honey as offerings, which were then distributed amongst the congregation.

One day, the congregation requested guidance for salvation so that their human wanderings could end. According to the author, Jainul Abdin, Guru Nanak

² The translator found the reference in question in Ayat 196 instead of 195

Dev Ji sang the following *shabad* (hymn) in *raag*
(melody) Tilang, page 721 SGGS:

Yak araj guftam pes to dar gos kun kartār.
I offer this one prayer to You; please listen to it,
O Creator Lord

Hakā Kabīr karīm tū be aib parvardagār. ||1||
You are true, great, merciful, and faultless, O
Cherisher Lord. ||1||

Dunīā mukāme fānī tēhktk dīl dānī.
The world is a transitory place of mortality – I
know this in my mind.

Mam sar mūe ajrāl girafteh dīl hech na dānī.
||1|| *rahāo.*
Yet, I do not realize in my mind that the
Messenger of Death has caught me by the hair
on my head. ||1||Pause||

Jan pīsar paḍar birāḍarān kas nes ḍastāngīr.
[When the messenger will take my soul] not my
spouse, children, parents, or siblings will be
there to hold my hand.

khīr bīaftam kas na ḍāraḍ chūh savaḍ takbīr.
||2||
And when at last I fall, and the time of my last
prayer will come, there shall be no one to
rescue me. ||2||

Sab roj gastam ḍar havā karḍem baḍī khīāl.
Night and day, I wandered around in greed,
contemplating evil schemes.

Gāhe na nekī kār karḍam mam tñ cḥinī ahvāl.

||3||

I never did good deeds; this is my condition.

||3||

Baḍbakḥaṭ ham cḥo bakḥīl gāfil benajar bebāk.

I am unfortunate, miserly, negligent, shameless
and without the Fear of God.

Nānak bugoyaḍ jan turā tere cḥākrā'n pā kḥāk.

||4||1||

Says Nanak, I am Your humble servant, may I
become the dust of the feet of Your slaves.

||4||1||

Eventually, it came time for Nanak *Shah Fakir*³ to leave, and the congregation asked for parting words. The Lord Nanak said, “may God be in your mind always; meditate on Him. Your devotion has been accepted in the Guru’s house.”

In this gathering, Hajji Gul Mohammad, Shiekhe-Arab Khawaja Jainul Abdin, the chief of the Quresh tribe, Aban Aswad, and the chief of the Basu tribe were all present. The news that Rukn-ud-din had accepted Nanak Shah as his spiritual guide spread like wildfire in Mecca⁴.

This meeting is narrated by the Arabic author in three hundred pages. He further writes that Rukn-ud-din

³ *Shah Fakir* is a Muslim title. In India and abroad, Muslims regarded Nanak as their own and addressed him using Muslim titles.

⁴ Guru Nanak’s meeting with *Qazi* Rukn-ud-din is also mentioned in the Guru’s biography, accredited to Bhai Bala.

came into contact with the Creator on a Friday evening in 917 *Hijri*⁵. Only the *qazi* knows the mystery of this contact. Lord Nanak presented the big toe of his feet to touch the initiation water⁶, but the *qazi* sucked Guru Nanak's toe in his mouth before washing it in water. The *qazi* went into a trance. I stepped forward to wake him up, but Lord Nanak stopped me and said, "let him enjoy the bliss."

After Guru Nanak's departure, Rukn-ud-din, who was imbued in God's love, became aloof, immersing himself in *simran* (the constant remembrance of God). He would spend his time in solitude, in the caverns of mountains. Amir (Shah) of Mecca received word that Rukn-ud-din had adopted Nanak as his *murshid* (spiritual guide), and the Mullahs issued a *fatwa*, branding Rukn-ud-din a *kafir* (non-believer). Rukn-ud-din was hauled from the mountains and the following *fatwas* were read:

1. He [Rukn-ud-din] is a *kafir*, and his *murshid*, Nanak Shah, is also a *kafir*.
2. Give him thirty lashes and then lock him in a box without food for eleven days.
3. Drive his kin from the country⁷.

⁵ *Hijri* is the Islamic calendar linked to Prophet Mohammad. 917 *Hijri* corresponds to 1511 AD.

⁶ Before the Tenth Guru started the modern-day tradition of preparing Amrit (the Sikh initiation nectar) using a double edged sword, the initiation Amrit used to be created by Gurus as per the ancient Indian tradition of touching the water with their toe.

⁷ Rukn-ud-din's descendants still live around the Tirah Mountains in Afghanistan.

4. Confiscate all his wealth.
5. Paint his face black and then walk him through the streets of Mecca.
6. Hang him upside down.
7. Bury him up to his neck in sand, and then stone him to death.

In summer heat, Rukn-ud-din underwent all punishments undeterred. When they removed him from a box after eleven days, people could hear God's name from every pore of his body. Finally, after twenty-two days, the seventh *fatwa* of burying in sand and stoning approached. Rukn-ud-din was carefree in eternal bliss and *simran*. There was no sign of sadness in him. At the end, the Shah of Mecca sent for a pen and ink so that Rukn-ud-din's last words could be documented. Rukn-ud-din came out of his trance and remembered the words of his guru: "share with others what you experience." There could have been no better time for this; the masses of Mecca had gathered for the stoning. In front of everybody he stated his last testament: "*Rubanian khatiba el imame hazrat Nanak ma, akallamehu ina feehay musle mun.*" This meant that "my religion and my god is Guru Nanak. He brings the greatest sacred message and the book. I believe in him. If you wish for redemption, then seek Nanak's shelter. Whoever reflects on this, will go to heaven." Upon saying this, he left his body. Those who had brought stones to hit him fell on his feet. Many in the crowd turned their faith to Nanak. Even to this day, the people of Badh tribe, who are lion-hearted, and

who are descendants of Nanak's devotees, still live in Mecca and Baitul Makadas. As Sikhs, they do not cut their hair.

While the Guru was in Mecca, he was presented with a robe on which ayats of the Quran and the Guru's praise were printed. The Guru was also presented with five *ser* (a unit of weight) of dates and honey. The second robe was presented by Karoon Hamid, who was the ruler of Egypt. This robe had an Arabic inscription as well. The robe kept in Dera Baba Nanak is one of these two. The Arabic author describes that the robe had the inscription, "*La Hilailla Alla Subhan Kaanikun To Min Zalmeen*," meaning "the worship-worthy God is the only one who would show mercy and bless a sinner like me." "*El Hamdul Il Lahe Aalmeen, Alrehman Rahim Malik Yomudin*."

When the Guru was leaving Mecca, people were inconsolable at the thought of his departure. Taajudin writes that the Guru gave them his staff as a memento and said, "*Aasa Man Fazale Rabeen Deedarun Pheere, Haka Ru Vaseera Tul Musatkim*." Translated, this means "consider this staff a seal of God. It shall remind you of the path to God." Nanak's disciples consider this staff an object of reverence.

According to Mushtaq, locals talk of three dwellings to the west of Mecca built in the memory of Sultan Bahu, Baba Farid, and Guru Nanak *Shah Fakir*.

From Mecca, the Guru went to the nearby town of Amara. It was in Amara that the Guru granted benediction to the town's chief, Janab Imam Gulam Kadar, the son of Imam Jafar. To display his gratitude, the Imam dedicated his mosque to the Guru and his teachings. To this day, according to Mushtaq, this mosque is known as Masjide Wali Hind (Mosque of the Indian Prophet). The town's people had to build a separate mosque for themselves.

Medina

From Mecca, the Guru went to Medina. Here, he made his presence known on the mausoleum of Prophet Mohammad. He started singing *kirtan* and said, "*Neehum, Hafat, Chahar Da Ha Salasa Wa Rubaya...*" meaning "the nine regions, the seven continents, and the fourteen worlds are all manifested in three qualities. Hinduism says that all this has divided a human's life into four parts. God is one, and none is his equal..."

When the Muslim community heard the singing—and on the mausoleum of Prophet Mohammad of all places—it caused a flood of emotion and anger. They grabbed whatever arms they could and ran, but as they raised their hands in order to strike and kill, they froze. Hazrat Ali, the descendant of Mohammad Sahib's son-in-law and a *Khalifa* (Leader; a successor of Mohammad), put his fingers in his ears and was arrested in this pose. The four Imams—Zaa-far Safi, Jamal Din, Kamal Din, and the Khalifa—were wonder-

struck. They asked for mercy on behalf of everybody and begged for an apology for their crime, saying to Nanak that he has been recognized as a *nabi* (prophet) and will be respected accordingly. The Guru forgave them and the townspeople's limbs began to move again. Here, the Guru's *kharav* (wooden slippers) are kept in his memory. The Guru blessed the congregation with *kirtan* for twenty-seven days and taught them to be one with God.

The Guru then moved on to Kafa, the ancestral place of Mohammad Sahib and Imam Mavia, located near the Farraat River. Here, Yajeed had martyred Hussain, the son of Hazrat Ali. This site is now famous as Karbala. On the south side of the town is a cemetery. The Guru preached there for three months and twenty-three days. The Temple of Nanak Shah the Prophet of India exists on this site. Descendants of Mavia, the priests of this temple perform *kirtan* in the cemetery.

The author of the journeys (Taajudin) writes that the Guru used to perform *kirtan* in the cemetery and that many admirers used to gather to listen and behold the sight of him. People enjoyed *naam* and *bani* (remembrance and praises of God), as well as talking to the Guru. A model of admiration, one of the disciples was a cheerful woman named Salima. Whenever she came to the congregation she brought offerings of food. Her husband traded in camels and, one day, when he returned from trading, the townspeople began to taunt him. Saying that his wife

contravened *Sharia* (Islamic) law, they complained that she spent her time sitting, unveiled, near this Indian fakir. On that day, Salima sat in the congregation near Baba Nanak, and she found such peace that she went into a trance. The Baba told Taajudin, “send Salima home.” The redness of the setting sun subsiding, Taajudin called out softly, and Salima woke up, startled. Taajudin said to Salima, “it is Baba’s wish! Child, go home promptly.” Before leaving, Salima touched Baba’s feet. She was enlightened and was blessed with spiritual sight. She took ten steps toward her home then turned around and said, “I believe that my husband has returned.” The Baba said, “remember to control your powers and keep your patience.”

Salima returned home to find her husband, red with rage and sitting with the others. Her husband, Gulam Yaya, glared angrily at Salima. She said, “as a result of my devotion, you were not executed for committing a murder. You also dug up five hundred gold coins and gave them to Majid.” Gulam Yaya was perplexed and said, “I didn’t tell you anything! I came here and returned immediately. How did you find out?” Salima replied, “first tell me what happened abroad.” The husband said, “when our caravan was getting close to Egypt, one of my camels ate a grape vine in an orchard. The old farmer became angry, and struck my camel with a stone and killed it. I, too, in anger, hit the farmer with the same stone and he died. I tried running away but was caught and was brought before the local courts. I narrated the whole episode

truthfully, but in accordance with the law, a verdict of death for taking a life was announced. I owed some people a debt of money, and appealed to the ruler that I be given three days for clearing my debts. A man dressed in white became my guarantor, and my appeal was accepted.

I came home, dug up the coins, paid my debt, and hurried back. My three days' grace had passed; it was impossible for me to get back in time, and the guarantor was arrested. People were impressed by the fact that I had returned and the ruler pardoned me. As soon as I was set free, I looked for my guarantor but could not find him. Upon hearing this, Salima suddenly cried, "true is the Creator! True is the Creator."

The next day, Salima went to see Baba ji with her husband. At first glance the husband realized that the Indian Baba was the guarantor, and, involuntarily, his head touched the ground in adoration. He was in bliss, and his gratitude knew no bounds. All doubts disappeared from the husband's mind, and happiness took over. His existence became exalted. The couple was on Nanak's feet like bees on a flower, and Allah entered into every pore of their skin.

Hali Pasha was the *qazi* of this town. Dogmatic in his approach to *Sharia*, he could not tolerate the fame of Nanak, the Indian Baba. Pride and hatred started spilling from his tongue. He issued a *fatwa* against Gulam Yaya and Salima for being infidels. He did not

stop there; he also issued a *fatwa* against Baba Nanak for being a *kafir*. Two days passed. On the third day after the *fatwa*, during evening prayers, Yakuv, one of Nanak's disciples, informed the congregation of some news: "*Inal Hazreena Wa Pasha Hali Halakatun Fi Marje Khalije Bajanbe Marag, Haji Mahaj, Jatun Hajanabi Falaalka Nanak Toheena Ta Muratdatun.*" This meant: "respected audience! Pasha is dying of a stomach ailment. He has been writhing on his deathbed for three days. This shows the power of our prophet, because he insulted our Baba." All agreed, crying, "*Lahantal Ho Alool Khanas,*" meaning "may this devil be cursed by Allah the pure!" The Lord Baba asked everybody, including Mardana (Guru Nanak's lifelong Indian companion who accompanied him on his Arabian journey), "let us go and inquire of his [Pasha's] health." The congregation replied, "why should we go when he is the one who passed a *fatwa* against us?" Nanak ji said: "*Khalaka Insani Yun,*" meaning "a person's responsibility is not to torment a tormentor, but to make him better."

Baba went to qazi's house and knocked at his door. Qazi's daughter answered, "what brought you here? What is your name?" At this time, Taajudin was with Nanak, the Guru answered "Fala Isma Maisam Nanak" meaning "My name is Nanak", and she went in to inform her father. As soon as he heard the name 'Nanak', the qazi flew into rage. He said a lot of inappropriate things, and asked Nanak to leave. The daughter was very sensible and polite. She was

extremely impressed upon meeting the prophet Nanak, and said “My father wishes you to leave.” The request was made the second time, that Nanak was here to inquire about the *qazi*’s health. The *qazi* again responded with a no. Finally, the Guru said, “I have come to beg forgiveness for my blasphemy.” The *qazi* thought that Nanak wished to come back into the faith. He gave permission to enter, and asked his daughter to spread his turban on the floor to welcome Nanak. Nanak, the saint of the saints, gathered the turban, and reached the *qazi*. The *qazi* tried to get up but couldn’t because his body was too weak. The Guru helped him up by putting his hands under the *qazi*’s arms, and then hugged him. His touch made *qazi*’s illness disappear; he felt healthy and enlightened. He saw a vision that the angels who were pushing him toward hell, let him go upon hearing the voice of Nanak. The *qazi* said, “it is your infinite blessing which has brought me into your gratitude.” His pride and hatred shattered to pieces, he apologized to Nanak for his conduct.

When it was time to leave, the disciples asked for something in memory. The Guru gave them the book he was carrying under his arm (they say it was *Japuji* in Arabic), which has been kept safely and is offered for sacred viewing. His disciples do not cut their hair, and call themselves followers of Nanak Shah Fakir, the prophet of India.

Next, Nanak crossed to the Bay of Dajla and set up a camp near the royal fort of Karoon Hamid in a town

called Kaikai (modern day Cairo). Nanak started *kirtan* in Arabic, which attracted many listeners. When the *kirtan* was over, a cultured man introduced himself as *Pir* (spiritual guide) Jalal, and had a very collegial discussion. *Pir* Jalal said “I am the spiritual mentor to the king Karoon Hamid. I am greatly impressed by your character. I have a request. My disciple Karoon Hamid is very cruel and greedy. Could you please set this misguided cruel man on the right path? He has filled forty treasuries with wealth, but is still not satisfied.” The Guru asked Jalal to bring Karoon along.

Urged by his spiritual mentor, Karoon became eager to meet Nanak. He felt peace on the mere sight of the Guru. Accompanied by *Pir* Jalal, he came and sat near the Guru. After customary exchange about health and wellbeing, the Baba handed a needle to the king and said, “your highness, please hold on to this needle for me. I will take it back from you in the afterlife.” Karoon fell in deep thoughts: How would I take this with me; everything remains behind, nothing goes along after death. The Baba spoke in his innocent and disarming manner, “if you cannot take a needle with you, what are you going to do with this world of wealth—the forty treasures you have amassed?” Karoon said, “please tell me the way to put this wealth to good purpose”. The Guru said, “worship Allah. Use your wealth for the wellbeing of people. Bring comfort to your subjects and you will find salvation.” The king was ecstatic, and promised to live by the Guru’s words. Jalal, the mentor, was

also pleased. Karoon kept and treasured the needle. To this day, the needle is offered for viewing as a remembrance of Nanak Shah Fakir. (This incident is corroborated in 'Sakhi Guru Nanak Dev Ji' by Bhai Bala).

Sadh Bela

At Mithan Kot, the five rivers of Punjab meet with River Sindh. This used to be the border of the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Guru had stayed here. This place has become an important spiritual site known as 'Sadh Bela'. This place was discovered by Baba Nav Khnadi ji, an '*Udassi Sadhu*' (a monk from an ascetic sect of Sikhism established by the son of Guru Nanak). From here the Lord moved to the Karachi '*Bandar*'—a city by the ocean. Sikhs sacrificed dearly to establish a gurudwara at this place, which was known to many as 'Akali Bunga'. From here, the Baba went to the Adan fort. These places are now in Pakistan. I, Syed Prithipal Singh, had reached the Adan fort on my way to the Hajj with the Syed group. There is a beautiful place built there called Nanak Shah *Kalander*⁸. From there, Nanak went to Jeddah Sharif, and sat near Eve's⁹ grave. There too is an important commemorative place called 'Nanak Shah Kalandar'.

⁸ Kalandar is a sect of Muslim monks

⁹ Muslims believe that upon expulsion from heaven, Adam landed in Sri Lanka and Eve in Jeddah. Jeddah is named after Arabic word "Jaddah" meaning "grandmother" of all mankind.

Twenty two miles from Jeddah, Guru Nanak started walking in front of the Shah Saraf's camel. Shah Saraf was leading a group of Hajj pilgrims from Panipat (India). He was a spiritual god-loving person. In Taajudin's account, Shah Saraf asked, "who is walking in the front?" Taajudin documented 62 questions and responses. Shah Saraf was pleased and satisfied with this exchange. He asked, "Oh Fakir, where are you heading?" "To Mecca Sharif" was the Guru's response. Saraf's disciples said, "you are a Hindu; you will not be allowed in Mecca," and refused to include Nanak in the caravan. Guru Nanak distanced himself from the caravan and continued. When Shah Saraf's group reached Mecca, they found that Nanak Shah was already there. They heard about Nanak's fame in Mecca, and were amazed to find out that he had been there for five months.

Pir Baghdad

Next, the Guru went to the shrine built on the grave of Hazrat Ali. He reached Baghdad, the city of *Pir* Dasatgir Hazrat Abdul Kadar Jilani, the *pir* of *pirs*. Here, the Guru sang the hymn '*Patala Patal Lakh Agasa Agas*' (There are nether worlds upon nether worlds, and hundreds of thousands heavenly worlds upon heavenly worlds), and explained the hymn in Arabic. This contradicted the Islamic belief that there are seven earths and seven heavens, so a fatwa was issued against Nanak.

Guniyate Salahine, an autobiography by *Pir* Kadar Jilani details this incident. The disciples of the *pir* had issued the fatwa to kill Nanak. When the *pir* and his disciples met Nanak, the *pir* bowed in front of Nanak and said in Arabic:

“Eh Pire Dasatgir Tu Mara Bagir

Dastam Duna Bagir Ke Goind Dasatgir

Taksire Nafas Ma Ra Raza Buay Name Risad”

Meaning “My respected audience, do not be surprised that I am bowing before him. I am doing so after recognizing him. You too should bow and offer *salam*. He is not a mere *pir*, he is a prophet. If you see him through my eyes, he is the God himself.”

Another man asked Nanak “Oh Fakir, why do you sing?” Nanak responded, “Mohammad Sahib with young Aisha on his shoulders used to listen to singing.” All present bowed before the Guru¹⁰.

Liberation of Behlol

The Guru’s fame had reached Behlol. He lived in a hut by the river Dajla. When the Guru visited this area, Behlol offered his praise and respect, and the day passed in spiritual discussions. It was time to eat. Behlol called out to his disciple Raza, “please bring something to eat.” The Guru asked to make sure that food be bought from a decent person. Behlol said, Lord, every soul in this city is pious, and all in the audience agreed. The Guru said, “you are mistaken.” He passed a comb through his hair, made two loops

¹⁰ This incident is described differently in Sakhi Bhai Bala

of two pieces of hair, and asked Raza “What do you see?” Raza respectfully responded “It is hair.” The Guru said “Raza, these are eyeglasses, look through these to check who is a decent human being.” Raza tied the ‘eyeglasses’ and a coin in his handkerchief and set out to buy food. Once he got to the market, he put on guru’s ‘eyeglasses’. The first shopkeeper appeared through the glasses as a deer, the second a rooster. He roamed through the entire marketplace until it grew late, and he was about to return disappointed. Finally, in a modest shop, he saw a human figure with uncut hair. Raza realized that the glasses showed to him the true animal nature of the merchants he had encountered. Raza presented the coin to the shopkeeper and asked for food. He handed Raza rice, beans and sugar. Looking at the large amount of food, Raza was puzzled. He thought that the shopkeeper had made a mistake. The shopkeeper said, “I have given you these groceries after careful consideration. I know the true worth of this coin. You hurry back, they are waiting for you. I see a man of wonder, a chance of salvation for me.”

During the Guru’s visit, everywhere in the area, water was salty and unfit for drinking. A well was dug under the Guru’s direction, and in this place, the water was sweet and clean. A monument erected near this well makes a mention of the Guru (Guru Shabad Ratnakar, Mahan Kosh by Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, page 831).

Discussion with my Father—Mushtaq Hussein's account

When my father was here on the Hajj, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the book *Siyahto Baba Nanak Fakir*. It was early in the morning; sheppards and travelers were gathering their day's provisions. It was time for the morning 'Namaz' (Muslim prayer). I went to my father's room, to discuss the book. "I am amazed at this book," I said to my father, "you should read it and make up your own mind. I find Islam on weak footing." I bid him 'Salam-el-Ekum' (Islamic greeting), and returned to my room. For three days, I waited my father to mention the subject. Finally, growing impatient, I asked him to return my book. He refused.

Later that day, I saw a caravan going to 'Baitul Mukkadas' (a place of pilgrimage). Without informing my father, I started walking with this caravan. I was walking alongside a man from Kachava who belonged to a Sindhi family. He was carrying an Arabic handbook of prayers with golden letters. It was *Japuji Sahib* in Arabic. My companion and I visited the commemorative platform of Nanak Shah Kalandar. A white sheet was spread on the platform, and three or four men were singing in Arabic. I asked the men, "Fala Haza Mazhabhu?" meaning "what is your religion?" One man answered, "Allah Inahu Nanak Shah Hindul Pir." I further asked, "who is your prophet?" to which he replied, "*Nanak Nabiyeen va Aaman Behin*" meaning "Nanak is our prophet and

faith.” I commented that in Islam, “*Kalame Nabiyeen Salamat Ayat Hi. Kitabun, Karamatun, Umatun*” meaning “a prophet is identified by three things: a sacred book (God’s message), power (miracle) and disciples.” The man I was addressing remained quiet. Another older gentleman thumped his chest and said, “*ama umati*” meaning “We are all his disciples.” He showed me a prayer handbook he was carrying and said “*Haza Kalamun*” meaning “This book has the word of God.” Pointing to the platform, he said, “*Haza Baitula Shahadan Yume Hashar*” meaning, “I circumambulated Guru Nanak. On the day of judgment, this ‘Kaaba’ will be my witness¹¹.” This exchange deepened my devotion to the Guru, and I became eager to reach Medina and consult my father.

In Medina I met my father. Upon seeing me upset, he returned my book and said, “we didn’t come here to read these stories. Focus on your objective.” At night I read the book and prayed that if this book holds truth, God will shower His grace and show me the direction. I had a dream that the judgment day was upon us. All beings were carrying their deeds in their hands, and were standing terrified. Jesus and his followers appeared, reading Jesus’s sacred writings. People were not pardoned. Then I saw that Jesus bowed to a palanquin sitting to his right, and stood solemnly. Then Moses’ appearance was announced. He too bowed and joined Jesus. Moses’ followers

¹¹ As part of the Hajj, a Muslim is required to walk around Kaaba in Mecca, at least once in their life. The Kaaba then testifies of this circumambulation on the judgment day.

joined the rest of the people. David was the third prophet to arrive, and met the same outcome. At last came Hazrat Mohammad Sahib. Everybody seemed pleased because Mohammad had promised salvation on the judgment day, but Mohammad too was unsuccessful, and joined the other prophets. This heightened everybody's anxiety. Then a voice arose from the crowd "Welcome! Bless Allah! Baba Nanak Fakir, the forgiver is coming." He brought peace wherever he glanced. His followers were carrying a saffron coloured flag and were reciting Waheguru! Waheguru! His body emitted divine light and splendor, which made all other lights appear dim. Guru Nanak wore a round white turban and a knee-length robe, with a staff in one hand. His arms were long; his fingers stretching passed his knees, and his mere glance was capable of mesmerizing. All forgot their worries and started reciting Waheguru! Waheguru! When the Guru came aside the palanquin, everyone thought that they will glimpse God in this palanquin. Instead, Nanak, the divine light sat in the palanquin. Curtains were raised from all four sides; everyone could view the incredible splendor of the Lord Guru. Everyone bowed, and so did I. At that time I woke up¹².

¹² Sikhism does not believe in the judgment day, and respects all faiths. Guru Nanak Dev ji says "There is only one teacher of teachers who appears in many forms. In whichever house [of faith] the Creator's praises are sung, follow that house, in that house rests true greatness. SGGGS-12".

In the morning, I went to my father and asked him the meaning of my dream. He laughed and said “I didn’t bring you here to make you superstitious. Wake up! It would have been nice if you had graduated from the Medina University.” My father said, “Guru Nanak erred by introducing his sacred writings in competition with Islam. However, his writing is magical, and I have tested it.” He continued, “once I stayed at Khanpur near the mountain region of Khuhi Gate at Mohammad Yusuf Zaildar’s house. This area is in Tehsil Rajauri, District Mirpur in Jammu. Two Sikhs and a Hindu came to see me and said that we married our daughter to Ujjagar Singh three years ago but he refuses to send for her. It has brought us shame in the community. Please do something. Even if he were to die, it would be for the better. It occurred to me that Ujjagar Singh, as a non-believer deserves to die. What more could I ask? I gave them an Islamic sacred charm and asked them to mix it in dates and feed it to Ujjagar Singh. But the charm had the opposite effect, and he became even bolder. I hypnotized an eleven year old boy as my medium to ask him what had happened. The boy said Ujjagar Singh recites *Japuji Sahib* and *Kirtan Sohilla* daily, and these sacred readings guard him. Your charm burns to ashes. No charm can affect him.” My father said that the Arabs didn’t understand the true Nanak and mistakenly started calling him God. In my mind, Ujjagar Singh’s story made it clear that Gurbani is most powerful and will be with us in God’s court.

My discussion about the Quran, Idolatry, and the Stone of Aswad

I related the story of Aisha to my father. When Mohammad Sahib was proclaimed to be the last prophet, his wife Aisha protested and said to people, “say that he is the ‘seal of prophets’ but do not say there is no prophet after him.” My father thought my views were a heresy, and warned me.

I begged my father to convince me that the Quran was the word of God, as opposed to Guru Nanak’s bani. I asked my father to live by the Quran’s requirement of uncut hair. The Islamic ‘*Israr ul Shariah*’ states: “For the Hajj and Umrah, in the name of Allah, when you come near this circle, you must offer a sacrifice and not cut your hair.” It is written in the fifth ‘*Bab*’ (section) that hair cutting has become a means of beautification which is prohibited in the Quran. So it is mandatory for the Hajj pilgrims, and it is the command of Allah, that hair should not be cut from the head of one who is performing a sacrifice. Umrah and sacrifice will not be accepted from one who doesn’t maintain the sanctity of his body.

Then we discussed idolatry. Islam broke all the idols, but got Mohammad Sahib to lay the stone of Aswad in the wall in Kaaba. It’s considered virtuous if this stone is kissed with closed eyes. Hazrat Ibrahim glorified Friday which is glorification of god Venus. The Iranian royals are witness to the fact that the

Aswad stone was brought from Iran, and these royals worshipped this stone.

I told my father that fifteen percent of people here were Nanak's disciples. My father replied, "I don't believe it. There can be no disciples of Nanak in Arabia." "If you wish," I said, "I can introduce you to such people."

I introduced Mehboob Bin Jafri of Medina to my father. He was a descendant of Hazrat Imam Jaffar, a disciple of Nanak. Mehboob told my father that due to fear of reprisals, they do not openly proclaim Nanak. Otherwise the whole country would follow Nanak. He said there were 114 families who keep their hair uncut, worship Nanak and believe in one God.

Reaching Jeddah

My father walked a mile with me to see me off from Mecca. I reached Jeddah. There is a commemoration place for Nanak near Eve's grave in Jeddah. The priests at this place are very endearing and God loving. One of them told me that on every full moon, he goes to the Gurudwara Sachkhand in Karachi. His companionship left a lasting impression on my life. His name was Walid Ishne Shahlab.

I reached home in Mirpur on May 2nd, 1930. On February 20th, 1931, I received a letter at home which inspired me to seek help in reforming my life. I came

to Lahore. Near Daata Vaas, there is 'Gurdit Bhavan Store' run by followers of Araya Samaj. I studied the Arya Samaj sect carefully for a month, but decided to leave them due to my aversion to 'Niyog' (the Hindu code of marriage¹³).

I had discussions with Christian priests in the churches on Mall Road, and learnt from them that Jesus was the son of God. I was not convinced. After some research I found out that he was the son of Joseph (Book, *Mati Luka Ayat 13/55 Luka 3/23 Yuhna 1/45*).

After three months had passed in a state of anxiety, I decided to read my Namaz in Jama Masjid. A flood of thoughts surrounded me during the Namaz, and I quit midway. After the Namaz, I came out and sat on the stairs. Sitting in this mood of sadness, I saw an elderly Sikh gentleman walking by, and felt instantly drawn to him. I joined him and asked "Where are you going?" "To the gurudwara," he replied. "Am I allowed to go?" I asked. "This door is open to anybody" he answered. We reached Gurudwara Dera Sahib. He went inside. A volunteer stopped me and asked, "are you carrying cigarettes or any other intoxicant?" "I am not," I replied. I went in and started looking for the same gentleman, but I couldn't find him. I asked around and wondered if he had stepped out, but he was there, just out of my sight.

¹³ The Niyog code allows a widow or a woman who can't conceive with her husband to have sex with another man to produce an offspring. If not successful with one, up to seven different men are allowed.

Later, I found Jathedar Achhar Singh again. I asked questions about idolatry. When asked about the paintings, he said, "these are commemorative, not for idol worship." I asked, "why do you bow before the Guru Granth Sahib?" He answered, "I bow before the Guru Granth Sahib for its teachings about God; I believe in them and follow them." He continued, "if you remove the words, and leave the paper, then a Sikh will have nothing to do with it." "Then give me this blessing also," I requested. He said, "Syed Sahib, this is a difficult path! One has to sacrifice body, mind and processions. Please go away, this is not a game, this matter demands hard struggle." I said "I am ready." I convinced him that I have been in agony. I also showed him the book which had impressed me. This is how this servant chose the path of Sikhism



Appendix: Other sources of Guru Nanak's Travels to the Middle-East

Recently, I came across some videos and posts on the internet, mostly by our Muslim brothers denying that there is any historical truth about Guru Nanak's journeys through the Middle East. Professor W.H McLeod also raised objection in his writing about the veracity of Guru Nanak's journey to Mecca. To make his case, he uses a flimsy assertion that no non-Muslim has ever been allowed in the precincts of the City of Mecca, let alone enter the holy Kaaba. Dr. McLeod overlooks all other evidence, including the fact that the Guru was dressed as a Muslim pilgrim, and that sixteenth-century Mecca was a desert town which was not subject to the level of management and control that it is today.

The evidence to support the Guru's travels through Middle East is overwhelming. I have documented some of the evidence in this Appendix.

Guru Nanak's journeys to Mecca and the Middle East

Bhai Gurdas ji is probably the oldest and most reliable biographer of Guru Nanak in India. His account in *Vars* is brief, but extremely valuable on two counts:

- He was born not long after Guru Nanak's passing (roughly 20 years), which means he had access to first-hand accounts of the Guru.

- He was better placed than most to be exposed to Sikh affairs. He was a nephew of the third Guru, and maternal uncle of the fifth Guru. He lived with the third, fourth, fifth and the sixth Gurus. He was exposed to the Sikh affairs and leadership of the time, and was close to Baba Budha ji, who had spent time with Guru Nanak. Bhai Gurdas ji was an accomplished writer and served as a missionary in India and Afghanistan.

Bhai Gurdas ji makes specific mention of the Guru's visit to Mecca, Medina and Baghdad. Guru Nanak's sojourns and discourses in Mecca and Baghdad are described at length¹⁴.

Janamsakhi by Sodhi Meharban, a nephew of the fifth Guru, is also a valuable source. He mentions that the Guru's Middle Eastern journey covered Multan, Hinglaj (Baluchistan), Mecca, Sham (Syria), Rum (Turkey), Kabul (Afghanistan), Peshawar, Tila Bal Nath (District Jehlum) and Talwandi (modern day Nankana Sahib).

Puratan or Walayat Wali Janamsakhi also corroborates the Guru's visit to Mecca. A manuscript of this *Janamsakhi* was taken to the East India Company Library by H.T. Colebrook in 1815 AD. Around 1872, Sikhs requested copies of this *Janamsakhi*, and were obliged by Charles Aitcheson,

¹⁴ Travels of Guru Nanak, Fauja Singh – Kirpal Singh, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala

the Lieutenant Governor General of Punjab. Thus, it acquired the name *Walayat Wali* (Foreign) *Janamsakhi*. The date of composition of this *Janamsakhi* has been worked out to be around 1634 AD (the time of the sixth Guru). The language, spelling, and location names used in this work, such as Saidpur in place of Eminabad, confirm its antiquity.

Another source is the *Bala Janamsakhi*, which is dated around 1658 AD. This last *Janamsakhi* is controversial because of its implausible claims of origin, and the haphazard order of places which may have been used by the author to bolster supernatural aspects of the Guru's miraculous flights to different places. This *Janamsakhi* on its own may not serve useful historical purpose, but supplemented by other sources, it can fill in some blanks.

Giani Gian Singh started as an employee of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and wrote the famous historical texts *Panth Prakash* (1880 AD), and *Twareekh Khalsa* (1892). He wrote about five very famous houses built in the memory of Guru Nanak in Aden, Jeddah, Mecca, Medina and Baghdad. During his time, four of these places were under the sponsorship of the Ottoman Empire. The priests and caretakers of these houses were employees of the Turkish ruler. With the exception of Aden, the other four served *langar* (free kitchen) paid for by the ruler. The Giani based his account on descriptions provided by many Hajj

travelers from Punjab¹⁵ who had visited these houses. All the houses were built in the shape of a mosque with a golden dome. Inside each, there was a platform. The priests wore a blue *kachh* which covered the knee but not the calf. The young Mushtaq, in this book, describes visiting some of the same houses in 1930.

Many Muslims take offense with the reference that Jeevan saw the Kaaba move as he moved Guru Nanak's feet to point them in a direction away from Kaaba. They claim that this could not have happened. However, there are many famous references in Islam which talk about the Kaaba moving¹⁶:

- Hazrat Iban writes in his book *Fatuhah Makih* that he saw the Kaaba rise to crush him when he thought inappropriate thoughts about the Kaaba during the Hajj (*Israr Shariat, part 2, page 74*)
- Rabia, when passing through a forest on her way to the Hajj for the second time, saw the Kaaba coming towards her to welcome her. Rabia said, I was hoping to see God. I have no need for God's house. If he were to walk towards me a length of a hand, I will advance

¹⁵ Gian Singh references the following Hajj travelers: Hajji Gulam Ali of Rangpura, Hajji Gulam Muhayudin Maulvi, Hajji Gulam Mohammad son of Ilahi Baksh of Sialkot, Hajji Fateh Khan ship broker from Bombay, Shahbaz Khan from Kabul, Hajji Kutab Din of Lahore and Hajji Imam Baksh of Delhi

¹⁶ Shri Guru Nanak Chamatkar, Utraardh, by Bhai Vir Singh, page 158

a yard towards him. What do I do with the Kaaba? This doesn't please me.

- Hazrat Ibrahim Azam went to Mecca, and was surprised to see the Kaaba missing. He thought his eyesight was failing him. He heard a voice which said, "there is nothing wrong with your eyesight, the Kaaba has gone to welcome a lady who is too feeble to walk to the Hajj" (*Tazkiratul Awliyah*, page 62).

Guru Nanak's Commemoration Places in Baghdad

Swami Ananda Acharya a *Sanyasi* (a sect of monks in Hinduism) living in Switzerland wrote a book of English poetry '*Snow-birds*' which was published by MacMillan in 1919 in London. In this book, there is a poem about Guru Nanak and Bahlol, which was inspired by a stone inscription Ananda Acharya came across in a building outside Baghdad. According to Ananda ji, the inscription in Arabic dated 912 *Hijri* read: "Here spake the Hindu Guru Nanak to Fakir Balol, and for these sixty winters, since the Guru left Iran, the soul of Balol has rested on the Masters' word, like a bee poised on a dawn-lit honey-rose".

The famous Sikh organization '*Chief Khalsa Diwan*' sent historian Karam Singh to pre-WWI Baghdad to research places related to Guru Nanak¹⁷. Karam Singh said that there is a place built in the memory of

¹⁷ The newspaper Khalsa Samachar, July 4 1918

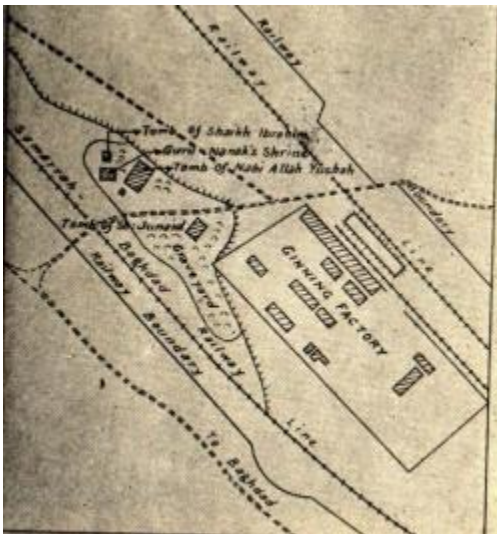
Abdul Kadar Jilani outside Baghdad in the North-East of the city, where Guru ji had stayed. The inscription seen by Ananda ji was likely in this place. However, Karam Singh could not visit this place because non-Muslims were not allowed. Karam Singh, however, talked about another commemoration place for the '*Hindi Pir*' to the west of the city built near the Baghdad-Samara railway line.

During the First World War when British and Indian armies conquered Baghdad, Sikhs discovered the place where Guru Nanak had his discourse with Bahlol. It lies to the west of the town, between the old graveyard to the north and the present Baghdad-Samara railway line to the south. Dr. Kirpal Singh, then a Captain in the Indian Medical Service, also saw it during the War, and he, in his letter, dated October 15, 1918, described it as follows¹⁸:

"It is really a humble looking building and known to very few people except Sikhs. To some Arabs it is known as well by the name of 'tomb of Bahlol'. You enter the building by a small door, on which something is written in Arabic, not visible to a casual visitor. Even with attention it is difficult to read. I could not read it hence could not copy it. I have taken the photograph of the outside, which I shall forward to you in due course. Entering the building, you come to a brick paved passage going to your right straight into the room (with a verandah), wherein you find the tomb and the raised platform. In the courtyard there are a few trees, mostly pomegranates." The 1918

¹⁸ SikhiWiki, Guru Nanak in Baghdad

photograph of the place, and a 1931 map of Baghdad are printed below.



In the above building a stone with the following inscription in Turkish was found:

“Korla Murad Aildi Hazrat Rab Majid, Baba Nanak Fakir Aulah Nake Imarte Jadid, Yadeelar Imdad Aidub Kildi Ke Tarikhena, Yapdee Nawab Ajra Yara Abee Murid Sayeed. Sun 917 Hjr”. The stone with the above inscription was turned into rubble during the

invasion of Iraq in 2003. A photograph is provided below.



The above inscription is written in an old mix of Turkish and Arabic which is difficult to translate. The following is one of many translations available:
“Behold! How a wish has been fulfilled by God the benefactor. Baba Nanak’s building is suddenly built, Seven *pirs* helped and this date 917 *Hijri* was set [for the building] so that the memory of his fortunate disciple could continue as a holy place established on earth. Year 917 *Hijri*”

As seen in the photograph above, the letter ‘1’ in the inscription is on a slant. Some writers claim it is a ‘2’, and set the date at the end of the inscription 927 *Hijri*. However, if the different words in the fourth line

describing the date (Yapdee Nawab Ajra Yara Abee Murid Sayeed), are evaluated based on *Abjad*¹⁹ math, they are respectively (27 + 59 + 205 + 215 + 13 + 258 + 244) which adds to 917, which matches the actual date written at the end of the inscription. The date of 917 *Hijri* on the inscription corresponds with the date of Rukn-ud-din's fatwa in the diary of the Arabic author. Swami Ananda ji gave the date on the other inscription he saw as 912 *Hijri*. It is likely that Swami ji may have misread the date on the inscription. In a stone inscription faded over centuries, the number 7 'V' in Arabic can be confused with 2 'Y'.

Guru Nanak's Commemoration Platform in Egypt

In the account of Karoon Hamid, there is a reference that Guru Nanak Dev ji had set up his congregation outside the royal fort in Kaikai (modern day Cairo). In 1885, the Sikh infantry went to Sudan as part of the British contingent to put down the Mahdist revolt. The infantry passed through Egypt, and came across a platform which was locally known as the monument to 'Nanak Wali'. According to Giani Gian Singh, Sikh soldiers reported that the platform was built outside the southern gate of the army citadel near the canal in

¹⁹ Arabic writers when describing a year, used letters from the alphabet (Alph, Be, Jeem, Dal, etc.) in their words so that if the sequence of the letters is written, it adds to the year being described.

Cairo. The Sikh infantry arranged prayers and a *Karah Prasad* for 900 Rupees at this platform²⁰.

Nanak's Monument in Turkey

In 1994, Devinder Singh Chahal of Canada went to Istanbul to present a research paper on Bioenergy. While there, he chanced on a 15x6 ft. stone monument in a public park in the Strait of Bosphorus. Devinder Singh knows Arabic script, and his attention was caught by the word 'Nanak' on the monument. The inscription is written in old Turkish in Arabic script and most of it is rendered illegible by severe weathering. There are cracks in the monument which have been filled by cement (see photograph below). The first line of the inscription has been translated. The rest of the long inscription is badly weathered, and has not been deciphered. The first line reads: Turkish: '*Jehangir jaman hind lat abd al majid Nanak*' English Translation: 'The Lord of the time, resident of India, Nanak – the man of God'²¹

The monument has a date of 1850 AD. It can't be conclusively established if the monument is related to Guru Nanak, or somebody else named Nanak. There are many unanswered questions. Why would somebody erect a monument to Guru Nanak in Turkey three centuries after his passing? Then again, Nanak is not a name found in Arabic or Turkish

²⁰ The reference to the platform is on page 264, in Giani Gian Singh's book the *Twareekh Khalsa*, published by the Department of Language Punjab.

²¹ SikhiWiki, Guru Nanak in Turkey

dictionaries. The reference to India may point to Guru Nanak.

Further study on its history indicates that this monument was built in the name of an Ottoman Empire Sultan Abd-al-Majid in 1267 *Hijri* (1850 CE). A port was established in that area (Kabata) in order to save the Sultan's boats from heavy winds, and this stone monument was put there at that time. On the back side of the monument, the benefits of the port are inscribed, and on front side facing the Straits of Bosphorus there is prayer for the Sultan. Could this prayer be connected to Guru Nanak? In Islam, Guru Nanak is often recorded as a Sufi named 'Baba Nanak', 'Baba Nanak Fakir' and even 'Hazrat Rab Majid Baba Nanak Fakir' as on the stone at Baghdad. The Sufi tradition in Turkey is linked with the one in India. Bearing this connection in mind, could this monument be in some way related to Sufi tradition? Until full inscription on both sides of the monument is translated, it can't be said for certain whether or not this monument is linked to Guru Nanak.

The common opinion is that Guru Nanak went straight from Medina to Baghdad, and took the shortest route. However, a second route through Cairo, Syria, Turkey and then Baghdad could have been easier. There is evidence that the Guru went to Cairo from Medina (this is supported by the Arabic author and the Guru's platform in Cairo). If a link between the Guru and Turkey is established, then the case for the second route becomes more plausible.



Front-view of the monument in Turkey.



The rear-view of the monument.